

Dear Blanche,

We have been writing so much about calm and insight, vipassana, and I find that it may so easily happen that while we use the same words different people may mean something else by this or that term. In general, when reading the teachings, it is good now and then to reconsider words one reads and to ask oneself: did I really understand what is meant by this or that term?

From your letters I learn little by little more about your background, about your life, and as far as I understand from your letters ~~xx~~ you have had your share of pain and sickness. This made you, already since long, reflect about life, about the impermanence and fleetiness of life. You started to analyze the phenomena of life but you found that only intellectual understanding is not enough, not deep enough. I could not help you when there was a crisis in your life, you found vipassana too academic and needed another practice together with it, the practice of calm. Also the Buddha had practised calm and, you said, why did he take the trouble to do that if it was not important. You also stated that you find that I am missing an important element by ~~xxxx~~ not practising calm as well next to vipassana; you are afraid that ~~xxxx~~ this is a limitation which hampers progress.

This is a summary of what you wrote but I am not sure I understood rightly what you mean by vipassana and by calm. I ~~understand~~ find it understandable that you get an impression that vipassana is a kind of academic analysis, but in reality this is not vipassana/ ~~why~~. Understanding develops in phases. There is first the very necessary preparatory phase: certainly this is intellectual. One learns about the different realities appearing through the six doors, one learns what is citta, what is cetasika, what is awareness etc. etc. When one corresponds and tries to explain about these things what else can one do but explaining in an intellectual way what is what? No wonder you get a very academical impression of all of this. This is not yet vipassana. It is only the necessary forming of foundation knowledge. One cannot just practice without knowing what is ~~what~~ what. This phase takes time, because all of us have certain pictures in our minds of what we think reality is, and first such misunderstandings have to be cleared up.

The development of insight is so gradual. When there is right understanding what is the object of vipassana, of what there can be awareness, there are conditions for moments of direct awareness of a reality, now and then, when it appears. But there are in between still many moments of thinking and also of reflection. It all is such a slow process and it takes time before there can be direct, ~~clear~~ clear understanding of things as they really are. In order to help others as well as myself, what else can I do but talking more about the object of awareness, about of what there can be awareness?

We often hear the words: impermanence, the arising and falling away, and we think we have ~~understood~~ understood. But have we? In it

right intellectual understanding, is it direct experience, or is it wrong understanding, that is, do we have a kind of picture in our mind of how we think it should be? I think we are inclined to have a picture of visible object which appears and disappears and we think this is its arising and falling away. We better first clear misunderstandings about it. What arises and falls away? And now we have to come back again to what is the object of insight. If we do not know this how can its arising and falling away be experienced? Then we may merely guess. It may sound academical again if we talk about what arises and falls away, but this intellectual preparation is necessary. But again, this is not yet vipassana. Again, we should not forget that there are phases of insight. There may be awareness now and then of one nāma or rūpa at a time, but the impermanence, the arising and falling away of that nāma or rūpa cannot yet be experienced, that is a later phase of paññā/. This phase can only arise after there has been direct knowledge of what is nama now and what is rupa ~~xxx~~ now. And this is already very difficult. We are so confused. I will elaborate later on about the object of awareness. But first I should try to explain more about how I understand calm.

Citta, the reality which knows an object is accompanied by many kinds of cetasikas, mental factors, which each have their own function. ~~Citta xxxxx~~ When an object ~~xx~~ such as sound is experienced, there is not merely one citta, there are a series or process of different cittas, succeeding one another and each performing their own function. Hearing is only one moment, it is a citta which just hears ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ the sound through the ear-door, it does not know details about it, it does not like or dislike the sound. Hearing falls away immediately but it is succeeded by other cittas which still experience the sound and have their own function, but they do not hear. One citta 'receives' the object, and then another one 'investigates' it, and these moments are not kusala or akusala, they are vipākacittas, like the hearing which is vipākacitta, the result of kamma. <sup>(shortly after that)</sup> ~~then~~ start the 'javana cittas', still in that ear-door process, and these are kusala or akusala cittas. Remember, it is still the ear-door process, no thinking about the object, no knowing of what causes the sound or what kind of sound it is. Still, because of conditions there can be kusala cittas or akusala cittas which experience that sound. Moments later there are mind-door processes which experience the sound through the mind-door and then processes which think about it, think about a concept of the sound. In these processes there arise kusala cittas or akusala cittas. When there are kusala cittas these cittas are accompanied by sobhana or 'beautiful' cetasikas, such as alobha or non-attachment, adosa or non-aversion, passaddhi or calm. Calm arises with every kusala citta, by its nature, whether you want it or not. It has the function of 'pacifying', calming the citta and other accompanying cetasikas, just for that moment. (Actually there are two cetasikas which do that, but these are details.) Paññā is another cetasika which may or may not accompany the kusala citta. It has a function

which is different from the function of calm: paññā knows or understands. There are many degrees of paññā: paññā which in general reflects about the impermanence of life, paññā which is intellectual understanding of realities, of nāma and rūpa, and then paññā which is direct experience of nāma and rūpa. This last kind of paññā which is paññā of vipassanā, develops in phases: first realizing what is nāma, what is rūpa and this through awareness of them when they appear at the present moment. Later on paññā realizes more of these nāmas and rūpas, it realizes through the direct experience their nature of impermanence and not self. This is a later phase, and paññā has to be developed stage by stage. What do we want in life, just calm, or do we want to develop understanding?

I still think there are many misunderstandings of calm. This word can have so many meanings in conventional language. Those who have pain or are in distress seek release. How can one even think or read the teachings when one has an excruciating pain? One can find out what is good for one's body, and even that is a kind of wisdom, although it is of another level than intellectual understanding of realities or vipassana. One may find out that it brings release to do breathing exercises, or not to think of one's worries, although one cannot control this. However, there may be conditions to think for some moments of something else and at that moment there is no worry at the same time since one citta cannot think of more than one object at a time. By experience one can come to know more about conditions which are right for oneself, so that there can be some restfulness or relaxation in one's life. All this is right, but we should know that this kind of serenity is not the calm which is cultivated through samatha, as it was ~~also before~~ <sup>at</sup> the Buddha's time ~~and before that~~.

What is the calm of samatha? It is the development of the calm which arises with each kusala citta. When there is calm which is kusala there is no lobha, dosa or moha, no restlessness or worry. There are many degrees of calm and those who understand very well and very precisely when the citta is kusala citta, different from akusala citta, and know the right conditions for calm, can develop it with a suitable object, such as the Buddha's virtues, the Dhamma, etc. All this is described in the Visuddhimagga. One cannot just develop calm with any subject, or <sup>in</sup> a way one thinks out for oneself. We should not confuse the calm of samatha with an idea one may have of calm. The word serenity seems to evoke associations of pleasant feeling or relaxation, it seems so tempting to attain this state, no worry in the world. Then there is already clinging to a concept one has of calm, different from true calm which is cultivated in samatha.

The development of calm is not essentially Buddhist, also before the Buddha's time people developed it, even to the stage of jhāna or absorption. But, we read in the Visuddhimagga, (XII, 8) that each phase is extremely difficult: 'only one in a hundred or a thousand can do it.' But still, people before and in the Buddha's time had already accumulations to accomplish it, so had the Buddha. For them it was

natural to attain jhāna. The Buddha explained that was not enough. We read in the 'Middle Length Sayings', Sallāpess of them that jhāna is an abiding in ease, here, now'. It is not the way it is eradicate subtle defilements, all latent tendencies. Only vipassanā is the way. But since those people were already so skilled in jhāna they could also use jhanacitta as object of awareness in order to know it as impermanent and not self. Thus they would not cling to it. If one knows this background it is not surprising that the Buddha also spoke about calm. He explained that there is the highest calm, the calm which accompanies the lokuttara citta which eradicates all defilements. When one is an arahat one has attained to the highest calm. Thus, it is not <sup>so</sup> that the Buddha encouraged everyone to develop jhāna. We have seen that it is extremely difficult. He told people that when they had such accumulations to 'go beyond it', to develop the wisdom which eradicates all defilements.

Do we have calm in our lives? When we study the teachings and reflect about them in the wholesome way there is already calm with one of the forty meditation subjects, that is, recollection of the Dhamma. One may be naturally inclined to this. But why would there be the need to cultivate calm to the stage of jhāna? One does not get to know oneself in that way, and one may cling to calm. When it arises, it arises, but it cannot last. It does not matter. Whatever arises (and for each of us it is different) can be the object of insight in order to lessen the clinging to self.

I want to come back again to the object of insight. We read in the 'Discourse on the Six Senses' (Middle Length Sayings III, no. 148) that the Buddha explained to the monks:

...When it is said, 'Six internal sense-fields are to be understood' in reference to what is it said? It is in reference to the sensefield of eye, the sense-field of ear, the sense-field of nose, the sense-field of tongue, the sense-field of body, the sense-field of mind....

When it is said, 'Six external sense-fields are to be understood', in reference to what is it said? It is in reference to the sense-field of material shapes, the sense-field of sounds, the sense-field of smells, the sense-field of tastes, the sense-field of touches, the sense-field of mental states. ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ ....

When it is said, 'Six classes of consciousness are to be understood', in reference to what is it said? It is in reference to the visual consciousness (seeing) that arises because of eye and visible object; the auditory consciousness that arises because of ear and sounds; the olfactory consciousness that arises because of nose and smells; the gustatory consciousness that arises because of tongue and tastes; the bodily consciousness that arises because of body and touches; the mental consciousness that arises because of mind and mental states....

Was all of this sound academic, just intellectual analyzing? No it is not. ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ Although not mentioned, always

implied is knowing these phenomena directly through awareness of them when they appear, one at a time, at the present moment. Thus, it is not merely intellectual thinking. Thinking cannot bring about detachment. ~~xxxxx~~ xx

Further on we read about the instructed disciple of the ariyans that 'he turns away from eye, visible object, seeing-consciousness.....' and this is said ~~xx~~ <sup>with regard to</sup> all the realities which appear through the six doors. We then read:

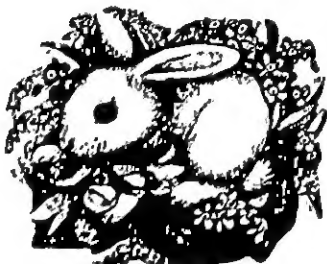
Turning away he is dispassionate; by dispassion he is freed; in freedom is the knowledge that he is freed, and he comprehends: Destroyed is birth, brought to a close the Dharma-faring, done is what was to be done, there is no more of being such or so.

He has attained arahatship. In one of your quotes of Maha Bua it is said// that all objects will lose ~~xxx~~ their significance due to the paññā that gradually cuts it off. This is the same as in the sutta text we just read. But let us not forget, it is the end of a gradual development, the last phase of paññā. Finally detachment from objects can be brought about, by seeing their true nature: ~~x~~ they are impermanent, dukkha and not self, anatta. We should not skip phases of paññā, and paññā develops during many lives. I<sup>4</sup> is useless to think of arahatship now. I<sup>4</sup> is better to live with the present moment and be aware of whatever reality appears.

We may have been thinking of the impermanence of the body, but that is only thinking. What is the body? I<sub>t</sub> is a concept, we think of. Don't we think of the body as a whole, my body which is sick? In reality there are different kinds of rūpas, such as hardness, temperature, motion or pressure, and also the rupa which is visible object is part of what we call body. Does'nt body have a colour? Flavour is another one, does it not have a flavour? Hardness may appear, but we often think of the leg or hand where it appears and that is not right awareness, it is again thinking. We should really understand first that the object of awareness is just one reality at a time, not more than one, and ~~xxxx~~ we should know that awareness is not thinking of the place where it appears. Then there would be again the idea of 'my body' to which we cling. Very, very gradually, realities will be known as only nama or only rupa, which do not stay. They appear for a moment and then disappear. That is the meaning of impermanence. Realizing impermanence is not thinking: 'It does not stay, it does not stay'. The arising and falling away, as I said, cannot be realized by paññā at the beginning phase. This phase is clearly knowing one nama or one rupa at a time, distinguishing their difference. This is very difficult. We should not mislead ourselves and erroneously think that we know what is seeing when it appears, what is visible object when it appears. Take this moment. We may know merely in theory that visible object is just what appears through eyes, not a thing. But does it not seem that at once the bird or flower appears? That is not visible object which appears through eyes. There is seeing, and this is an element which knows, different from visible

object. While I say this we may understand in theory, but that is different from the paññā which has direct understanding of seeing just when it appears, or of visible object just when it appears. If we do not realize that there is no paññā of vipassana yet, we cannot even begin to develop it and we will be deluded all the way.

Thinking of the shape and form of a rabbit or a cat is not seeing which just experiences what appears through eyes. Have we realized this already, not in theory, but by practice? Khun S<sup>u</sup>jin said these moments are very close together, like sandwiches. If there is no awareness yet of what appears now, indeed one may take for vipassana what is only intellectual thinking. One may think: there is something missing, it is all too intellectual, academic. That is why you looked for some other way and thought of calm. It is important now to reconsider the ideas one has of calm and vipassana. Otherwise there is no end to misunderstandings about different realities. It is useful for all of us to frequently consider: what have I understood and what did I understand not yet. 'Impermanence' or 'Arising and falling away' is very hard to thoroughly and clearly understand, yes, impossible, if one has no clear understanding first of what is nama and what is rupa and that through immediate awareness of them when they appear.



With metta, Nina.